

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 TEHRAN 08187 281502Z
ACTION SS-25

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S E C R E T TEHRAN 8187

EXDIS

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, PINS, PINT, IR
SUBJ: AUDIENCE WITH SHAH

1. AT NOON, AUGUST 28, I HAD MY FIRST AUDIENCE WITH THE SHAH SINCE MY RETURN FROM HOME LEAVE. I WAS SANDWICHED IN BETWEEN AUDIENCES HE WAS HAVING WITH SENIOR MINISTERS OF THE NEW CABINET, WHO HAS BEEN APPOINTED THE PREVIOUS DAY.
2. I FOUND THE SHAH THIN, TENSE, AND DISPIRITED. THERE WERE UNACCUSTOMED GAPS IN HIS CONVERSATION, WHEN HE WOULD GAZE OFF INTO SPACE. HE APPEARED TIRED AND AFFECTED AN ALMOST FATALISTIC VIEW ABOUT HIS AND HIS COUNTRY'S FUTURE.
3. AT THE OUSSET OF OUR CONVERSATION, HE TURNED TO THE INTERNAL DISTURBANCES WHICH HAVE WRACKED THE COUNTRY THIS PAST SUMMER AND TO THE DRASTIC CHANGES IN GOVERNEMENT COMPOSITION AND POLICY WHICH HE HAS HAD TO TAKE IN AN EFFORT TO RESTORE TRANQUILITY. HE SAID HE HAD DELIBERATELY CONTRIVED TO PRESENT THESE CHANGES SO THAT THEY

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WOULD BE SEEN AS CONCESSIONS FROM HIM PERSONALLY ("ALMOST A PERSONAL DEFEAT"), BUT HE HAD NO CONFIDENCE THAT "THESE PRIESTS" CAN EVER BE FULLY SATISFIED. HE SAID "THEIR" DEMANDS ARE UNENDING-- AND CITED "THEIR" INSISTENCE ON NO WOMEN IN THE CABINET, NO WOMEN IN HIGH PLACES, ETC.

4. THE SHAH SAID THAT HIS NEW PRIME MINISTER SHARIF-EMAMI HAD TAKEN

SOUNDINGS WITH RELIGIOUS ELEMENTS PRIOR TO ASSUMING OFFICE AND THAT, IF ANYONE CAN PLACATE THEM, HE IS THE ONE WHO CAN DO IT. HOWEVER, HE EVINced NO RPT NO CONVICTION THAT EMAMI WOULD SUCCEED. HE FELT AYATOLLAH KHOMEINI, "THAT MAD MAN," IS FORCING THE ISLAMIC PACE AND THAT THE OTHER AYATOLLAHS ARE SCARED TO RESIST HIM.

5. HE RESTATED HIS BELIEF THAT THE ONLY WAY TO BRING HIS COUNTRY THROUGH THESE TURBULENT TIMES IS TO "LIBERALIZE" AND TO TRY TO ESTABLISH A FIRM DEMOCRATIC BASE FOR THE GOVERNEMENT. HE WAS DETERMINED, THEREFORE, TO GO THROUGH WITH "100 PERCENT FREE" ELECTIONS IN THE HOPE THAT THEY WILL PRODUCE A GROUP OF RESPONSIBLE LEGISLATORS WHO WILL SHARE POLITICAL AUTHORITY. HOWEVER, HE SEES NO RPT NO INDICATION THAT TRULY COMPETENT PEOPLE ARE PREPARED TO GO INTO THE ARENA OF POLITICS. INSTEAD, ALL THOSE "OLD WORMS" WITHOUT POLITICAL CONSTITUENCIES OR PARTIORTIC INSTINCTS SEEM TO BE COMING FORWARD AS POTENTIAL CANDIDATES. THEREFORE, THERE IS THE GREAT RISK THAT THE ONLY RESULT OF HIS LIBERALIZATION POLICY AND THE "FIASCO" OF THE RASTIKHIZ PARTY WILL BE THE COLLAPSE OF THAT GENERATION OF LEADERS WHO HAVE ASSUMED PATRIOTIC RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE PAST FEW YEARS AND THEIR REPLACEMENT BY A VACUUM.

6. IN THAT CASE, HE SOLILIQUEZED, IRAN WOULD ITSELF FACE COLLAPSE. THE SOVIETS COULD MOVE IN RAPIDLY AND
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"PRETEND TO SPEAK FOR THE POEPLER OF IRAN." THE UNITED STATES, WETERN EUROPE AND JAPAN WOULD BE THE LOSERS, AND THE SOVIETS WOULD HAVE WON THEIR GREAT STRATEGIC VICTORY. FOR THIS REASON, HE ASSUMES THE KGB IS ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN STIRRING UP TROUBLE IN IRAN. HE THEN WENT ON TO SAY THAT THE "POPULAR IRANIAN MENTALITY" SEES A FOREIGN HAND IN EVERYTHING. THIS IS NATURAL FROM THE HISTORY OF BRITISH AND RUSSIAN INTRIGUE IN THIS COUNTRY. IT IS FOR THIS REASON THAT "MANY PEOPLE" BELIEVE THE UNITED STATES IS ALSO INVOLVED IN THE CURRENT EFFORT TO DESTABILIZE IRAN.

7. I TOLD THE SHAH THAT I HAD HEARD SUCH REPORTS AND WAS DISTURBED TO LEARN FROM MY DCM THAT THESE RUMORS WERE BEING REPEATED BY SENIOR IRANIAN OFFICIALS. I SAID THIS REMINDED ME OF THE FINAL DAYS OF BHUTTO'S REGIME, WHEN HE HAD APPARENTLY COME TO BELIEVE THAT THE U.S. WAS INTRIGUING AGAINST HIM. SINCE BHUTTO WAS AN INTELLIGENT MAN, HE MUST HAVE BEEN THE VICTIM OF A "DISINFORMATION" CAMPAIGN, WHICH COULD HAVE INCLUDED FABRICATED DOCUMENTS. IF THERE WERE ANY DOCUMENTS ON ALLEGED U.S. ACTIVITIES IN IRAN OR EVEN SPECIFIC

INSTANCES OF SUCH ALLEGATIONS, I WOULD HOPE THE SHAH WOULD HAVE THEM BROUGHT DIRECTLY TO MY ATTENTION. HE HASTENED TO SAY THAT THERE WERE NO RPT NO SPECIFIC ACCUSATIONS, MERELY THE VAGUE MENTAL DOUBTS OF THE AVERAGE IRANIAN.

8. WE THEN TURNED TO DISCUSSING WHAT THE UNITED STATES GOVERNEMENT MIGHT DO TO DISPEL THESE RUMORS. WE BOTH AGREED THAT ANY FULSOME U.S. PRAISE MIGHT BE COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE AND HE FINALLY, AFTER SHAKING HIS HEAD AS IF HIS WERE OVER-TIRED, SUGGESTED I DISCUSS THE MATTER WITH COURT MINISTER HOVEYDA AND THE NEW PRIME MINISTER.

9. OUR DISCUSSION OF FOREIGN POLICY, WHICH FOLLOWED THIS LONG DIALOGUE ON THE DOMESTIC SCENE, WAS CONCEN-
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TRATED ON REGIONAL MATTERS, BUT THE SHAH WAS MUCH LESS TRENCHANT THAN USUAL AND APPEARED NOT TO HAVE BEEN FOLLOWING FOREIGN AFFAIRS WITH HIS USUAL ACUITY. I SHALL REPORT HIGHLIGHTS OF THOSE DISCUSSIONS IN SEPARATE CABLES.
SULLIVAN

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